

23 May 2002

Original: English

**Eighth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002

Item 9 (b) of the provisional agenda*

National standardization: office treatment of names

Adaptations of German place names in the Polish language

Submitted by Poland**

Summary

The subject of the study is the adaptation of German place names in Polish territory. These names appeared as one of the consequences of German settlement. The analysis covers nearly 1,200 local place names in those areas of Poland in which Polish settlement preceded German settlement and which were originally inhabited by a population using Polish dialects. The north-western region of Poland was therefore omitted.

The German names were adjusted to the Polish language in the process of onimic integration, which is part of a dynamic process of language integration. This process occurs through social contact between peoples and languages. Characteristic features of this contact are always of a historical nature and are related to political and social phenomena and cultural life.

The polonization of German place names has occurred through three main processes: (i) phonetic substitution; (ii) morphemic substitution; and (iii) lexical substitution. These processes can intersect with one another, and numerous subgroups can therefore be identified.

The adaptation of German names to the Polish language and onimic systems can serve as a model for the adaptation of names from other languages and for contemporary adaptation of names. An investigation of the adaptation of a foreign name layer in the past reveals the complexity and importance of the issue of coexisting place names of various origins in a country and makes it possible to draw conclusions that are applicable universally.

* E/CONF.94/1.

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